

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly cancel claims 1 and 10-23 as follows:

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24. (Currently Amended) A The method of claim 21 for enhancing tolerance of a plant against stress comprising applying to the plant an agent comprising a C₄-C₂₄ ketol fatty acid,

wherein the C₄-C₂₄ ketol fatty acid contains one to six carbon-carbon double bonds, such that the number of the double bonds does not exceed the number of carbon-carbon bonds in the ketol fatty acid.

25. (Currently Amended) A The method of claim 21 for enhancing tolerance of a plant against stress comprising applying to the plant an agent comprising a C₄-C₂₄ ketol fatty acid,

wherein the ketol fatty acid contains 18 carbon atoms, and two carbon-carbon double bonds.

26. (Currently Amended) A The method of claim 21 for enhancing tolerance of a plant against stress comprising applying to the plant an agent comprising a C₄-C₂₄ ketol fatty acid,

wherein the C₄-C₂₄ ketol fatty acid is 9-hydroxy-10-oxo-12(Z),15 (Z)-octadecadienoic acid.

27. (Previously Added) A method for promoting growth of a fungus comprising applying to the fungus a C₄-C₂₄ ketol fatty acid.

28. (Previously Added) The method of claim 27, wherein hyphae of the fungus are proliferated.

29. (Previously Added) The method of claim 27, wherein the C₄-C₂₄ ketol fatty acid contains a carbon atom constituting a carbonyl group and a carbon atom connected to a hydroxyl group, one of the above carbon atoms is located at the α or γ position with respect to other carbon atom.

30. (Previously Added) The method of claim 27, wherein the C₄-C₂₄ ketol fatty acid contains one to six carbon-carbon double bonds, such that the number of the double bonds does not exceed the number of carbon-carbon bonds in the ketol fatty acid.

31. (Previously Added) The method of claim 27, wherein the ketol fatty acid contains 18 carbon atoms, and two carbon-carbon double bonds.

32. (Previously Added) The method of claim 27, wherein the C₄-C₂₄ ketol fatty acid is 9-hydroxy-10-oxo-12 (Z),15 (Z)-octadecadienoic acid.